

THE
GOSPEL
ACCORDING
TO JESUS



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LORDSHIP SALVATION

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JESUS, by Dr. John F. MacArthur (Zondervan, 1988; 252 pages). The purpose of this highly controversial book is to promote Lordship Salvation.

Lordship salvation is a child of Covenant theology; it is an interpolation. It is not the childlike faith of John 3:16. It rightly insists upon repentance, but wrongly includes a change of behavior--one must "bring forth fruits for repentance" (Lu. 3:8) in order to be saved.

No one questions that there must be a sincere change of mind, a turning from one's self to the Savior; but Lordship advocates attempt to make behavior and fruit essential ingredients of, rather than evidence of, saving faith.

The Lordship war cry is, "If Christ is not Lord of all, He is not Lord at all." The old Wesleyan adage is also used: "Christ saves us from sin, not in sin." This is the Arminian admixture of justification and sanctification for initial saving faith. But Scripture teaches that the Lord Jesus saves "the ungodly" (Rom. 5:6) in their sin, and then believers from their sin (Gal. 5:16).

Dr. MacArthur is not alone in his legitimate concern about the barren results of much of present-day evangelism. Many others, too, are just as keenly aware of and burdened about so-called easy believism--professors of faith who subsequently bear no fruit commensurate with true salvation. But, the remedy is not to draw from the previous dispensation, resorting to the Gospel according to Jesus.

The author was quite correct in titling his book The Gospel According to Jesus. The Gospel that Jesus taught in His pre-Cross humiliation as Israel's Messiah was, for all intents and purposes, Lordship Salvation.

On the ground that the author takes (Covenant Israel), he is right concerning Lordship salvation. The problem is that he is on the wrong ground: the dispensation of law! What our brother neither sees nor understands--and he is by no means alone--is that there are not two ways, but two distinctly different kinds of salvation! But both have the same blessed source, the finished work of the Cross, and both are entered by faith.

Dr. MacArthur bases Lordship Salvation upon the Gospel according to Jesus, John the Baptist, and the early disciples. This kingdom Gospel is directed to the covenant nation of Israel. The Lord Jesus said, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Paul said of Him, "Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers" (Matt. 15:24; Rom. 15:8).

The Lord Jesus' Kingdom Gospel had nothing to do with Christians, or the Church. He was making converts to the coming earthly millennial kingdom, ultimately the eternal kingdom upon the new earth. There was no such person as a Christian, no such organism as the Body of Christ, prior to and during the Lord Jesus' earthly ministry. The disciples were not Christians until they were placed in the newly-formed Church, which is His Body, on the day of

Pentecost. The word ekklesia (church), incidentally, does not occur in the Gospels except for three references in Matthew 16:18 and 18:17.

The true, heavenly Gospel for today--the dispensation between Pentecost and the coming Rapture--is scripturally referred to by Paul as "the Gospel of the grace of God," "the Gospel of His Son," and "my Gospel" (Acts 20:24; Rom. 1:9; 16:25). Dr. Chafer insisted upon the complete uniqueness of Paul's Gospel:

Paul's Gospel produces, for those who believe, a totally new order of existence, after another order of man. Christ lives in me. It is not that the old man has received additions and advantages as in a legal religion--a former Gospel--but that I as a Christian am made anew of Him who is the Son of God, and that the old man has been superseded and judicially put an end to in His Cross. Being crucified with Christ, it has no longer any recognized existence before God; while I, as a new creation, am in Christ before the Father, and He lives in me (Gal. 2:20). This is the very kernel of Paul's Gospel.

Paul's Gospel presents the New Creation relationship, where the believer is in the ascended Lord Jesus, and He is in the believer. This two-fold union establishes an identity of relationship and life that surpasses all human understanding. By the baptism of the Spirit, wrought as it is for everyone in the present dispensation of grace when one believes (1 Cor. 12:13), the saved one is joined to the Lord (1 Cor. 6:17; Gal. 3:27).

And by that union with the ascended Lord Jesus he is made a partaker of His ascension life (Col. 1:27), is translated out of the power of darkness into the kingdom of the Son of His love (Col. 1:13), is crucified, dead, buried, ascended with Christ in the heavenlies (Eph. 2:6), is a citizen of heaven (Phil 3:20), is forgiven all trespasses (Col. 2:13), is justified (Rom. 5:1), and blessed with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ (Eph. 1:3).

The Gospel according to Jesus was of a different nature than the above. His Gospel was on the level of the law and the earthly kingdom, as it was designed to be. Read the writings or sit under the ministry of the Lordship salvationists as having to do with the Christian life, and you will be exposed to very little of Pauline truth. You will be taken as far as Romans Seven, and there you will remain under the grinding grip of the law. Dr. Chafer again:

The Church is not mentioned once in relation to the Gospel according to Jesus and His teaching of the kingdom, nor are those teachings applied to her; for her part in the kingdom is not to be reigned over, but to reign with Christ--her Head. She, being His Bride, is His Consort.

There is a very dangerous and entirely baseless sentiment abroad which assumes that every teaching of Jesus must be binding during this dispensation simply because He said it. The fact is forgotten that the Lord Jesus, while living here, keeping, and applying the Law of Moses, also taught the principles of His future kingdom; and, at the end of His ministry and in relation to His coming Cross, He also anticipated the teachings of grace--as He ministered to us through Paul. If this threefold

division of the teaching of the Lord Jesus is not recognized, there can be nothing but confusion of mind and consequent contradiction of truth --L.S. Chafer (Systematic Theology IV:224).

The Lordship Salvation error is a natural product of Reformed/Covenant theology. Since it is anti-dispensational, hence fails to "rightly divide the Word of truth," its advocates attempt to get the right results from the wrong realm of the Word, i.e., the law realm. This is Dr. MacArthur's position. Statements from his The Gospel According to Jesus are in italics:

There is a tendency, however, for dispensationalists to get carried away with compartmentalizing truth to the point that they can make unbiblical distinctions. An almost obsessive desire to categorize everything neatly has led various dispensational interpreters to draw hard lines not only between the church and Israel, but also between salvation and discipleship, the church and the kingdom, Christ's preaching and the apostolic message, faith and repentance, and the age of law and the age of grace. The age of law and the age of grace division in particular have wreaked havoc on dispensational theology and contributed to confusion about the doctrine of salvation (p. 25).

It is a mistake of the worst sort to set the teachings of Paul and the apostles over against the words of our Lord and imagine that they contradict one another [they do not] or speak of different dispensations [they do] (p. 214).

Now to "rightly divide" is not to confuse, but to clarify. Confusion will cause one to slip into the wrong dispensation of the Word. Dr. MacArthur is not alone in this practice of failing to draw a hard and fast line, or any line at all. This same delinquency has already developed in such dispensational seminaries as Talbot, Grace, and Dallas.

The "doctrinal development of Orthodoxy," i.e., Progressivism, that is being perpetrated by some seminary leaders is simply wrongly-divided unorthodoxy. Their "developing dispensationalism" is playing into the hands of the Covenant advocates. It is the tragic spectacle of the Evangelical father rushing out to intercept the prodigal Covenant son, covering him with kisses, cloaking him with the robe of acceptance, and merrily escorting him into the house.

These Evangelical leaders have forsaken and fled from the hard-line dispensationalism of Darby, Scofield, and Chafer. All that they have was received from them, but now is being squandered with reckless abandon. They have gone backward and fallen to the ground; right down to the earthly Covenant level! Why is it, for instance, that so many Dallas graduates are Covenant-oriented?

This is similar to what occurred a generation ago when passive evangelical leaders gave the right (wrong) hand of fellowship to the aggressive charismatics. That was a matter of subjective fellowship, since there was so little actual doctrine involved. Now it is more an objective matter--a breaking down or confusing of doctrinal distinctions, and that by those who have previously held and maintained rightly-divided doctrine.

Dr. MacArthur is in no sense of the word a valid dispensationalist. Rather, he is an amalgamationist. This book, as well as others of his, is larded with Covenant quotations. The following are some of the writers the author utilized in an effort to authenticate his claims for Lordship Salvation:

J. Alleine, O.T. Allis, W. Arn, L. Berkhof, G.C. Berkouwer, C.J. Crenshaw, J. Edwards, J. Flavel, J. Gill, T. Goodwin, Wm. Guthrie, M. Henry, C. Hodge, M. Lloyd-Jones, G. Machen, T. Manton, L. Morris, D. Niquette, J.I. Packer, A. Pink, E. Reisinger, J.C. Ryle, R. Shank, C. Spurgeon, R. Stedman, J. Stott, R.A. Torrey, A.W. Tozer, G. Vos, B.B. Warfield, and T. Watson.

What true dispensationalist would call upon 39 or more Covenant anti-dispensationalists to substantiate the thesis of his book? And what Covenant anti-dispensationalist would write a Foreword to such a book if it were in any way dispensational? It is certainly a legitimate question to pose: "Just what side is Dr. MacArthur on?"

The author includes not one, but two Forewords. The first is by J.I. Packer:

It is a fine book--clear, cogent, and edifying--doing for us [Covenantists] what is nowhere else done so well, and that is very much needed at this time. I wish it a wide circulation and a thoughtful readership. It will render the Christian world great service. I commend it enthusiastically (p. x).

The second is by James Montgomery Boice:

If MacArthur's book succeeds in turning many from this weak gospel and false confidence, as I believe it will, The Gospel According to Jesus may be one of the most significant books of this decade (p. xi).

Now, consider some of the confusion of mind and contradiction of truth as contained in Dr. MacArthur's attempt to fasten the Lord Jesus' Kingdom Gospel upon His heavenly Body:

On a disturbing number of fronts, the message being proclaimed today is not the gospel of Jesus (p. 15).

And it is a good thing! Today we are to minister Paul's "by grace are ye saved through faith" Gospel, by which we are recreated in the Body of Christ; not the Lord Jesus' Gospel relating to the law-oriented theocratic kingdom.

We can not confidently point men to the way of life unless we get the right gospel (p. 17).

The way of life that Dr. MacArthur is pointing to via the Gospel according to Jesus results in "the law as the rule of life." Whereas the glorified Lord Jesus' present Gospel according to Paul results in "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:2).

Jesus did not come to proclaim a message that would be invalid until the Tribulation or the Millennium. His gospel is the only message we are to preach--any other gospel is under God's curse (Gal. 1:6-8) (p. 27).

The Galatians were not saved by the Gospel according to Jesus; they were Galatians 2:20 Christians, saved through Paul who "called you into the grace of Christ" (1:6).

Jesus was not announcing a new way of salvation distinct from OT redemption (Matt. 5:17). This is to say that salvation under the dispensation of grace is no different from salvation under the law (p. 42).

The Gospel according to Jesus under the law consisted of forgiveness of sins by the future work of the Cross, and eternal kingdom life upon the millennial, and subsequently new, earth.

The Gospel according to Paul consists of the forgiveness of sins by the past work of the Cross, and eternal life in Christ who is Head, in heaven. Both salvations are eternal, but the one is in the glorious earthly kingdom, the other is in the glorious heavenly Person, who is our Life.

This once blind beggar became the first person recorded in Scripture to be thrown out of the synagogue for Christ's sake (John 9:34). This incident began the breach that finally resulted in the separation of the church and Israel (p. 73).

One is constrained to refrain from commenting upon such an unworthy statement. First, the thrown-out beggar was not a Christian, but a converted Israelite. Second, the breach between Israel and the Church was consummated once and forever via the separating work of the Cross, and was manifested at Pentecost.

The rich young ruler failed the test. He really did want eternal life; but he was unwilling to come the way Jesus specified, the way of confessing his sin and surrendering to Jesus' lordship (p. 87).

The eternal life that the rich young ruler sought was kingdom life, which he could have gained by confessing his sins and surrendering to Jesus' lordship. He never would have become a Christian, "hidden with Christ in God" (Col. 3:3).

God preserves His people in this world through their perseverance (p. 98).

This is Covenant teaching; i.e., if you persevere to the very end, you will be saved. Dr. MacArthur's legal orientation causes him to put perseverance in reverse. The Christian perseveres because the Father has recreated him in His Son; and it is in and by His life that he perseveres. Grace!

We learn from his [Judas'] story that it is not enough to be close to Jesus Christ. One may "accept" Him and still fall short. The individual who responds positively but not wholeheartedly risks being lost and damned forever (p. 100).

The author spends most of an entire chapter (8) on Judas, using him as an example of a professor of Christianity. Neither Judas nor any of his fellow disciples knew anything of what it meant to be a Christian. At one time, prior

to His death, "all the disciples forsook Him, and fled." "From that time many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him" (Matt. 16:56; John 6:66). The term "disciple" (follower, learner) does not occur after Acts. Discipleship has to do with the law economy. As the Gospels are a transition from law to grace, so the book of Acts is the transition from Judaism to Christianity.

This active, continuous attitude of repentance produces the poverty of spirit, mourning, and meekness Jesus spoke of in the Beatitudes (Matt. 5:3-6). It is the mark of a true Christian (p. 165). There is no salvation apart from the repentance that renounces sin (p. 168).

Repentance, as it relates to both kingdom salvation and Christian salvation is explained by Dr. Chafer, in his book titled Salvation (pp, 48-50):

Today it is an error to require repentance as a preliminary act preceding and separate from believing. Such insistence is too often based on Scripture which is addressed to the covenant people, Israel. They, being covenant people, are privileged to return to God on the ground of their covenant of repentance. There is much Scripture both in the OT and in the New that calls that one nation to its predicted repentance, and it is usually placed before them as a separate unrelated act that is required.

The conditions were very different, however, in the case of an unsaved Gentile, who was a "stranger to the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world"; and equally different for any individual Jew in this dispensation. In presenting the Gospel to these classes, there are 115 passages at least wherein the word "believe" is used alone and apart from any other condition as the only way of salvation. In addition to this there are upwards of 35 passages wherein its synonym "faith" is used.

There are but six passages addressed to unsaved Gentiles wherein repentance appears either alone or in combination with other passages. These are: Acts 11:18; 17:30; 20:21; 26:20; Romans 2:4; and 2 Peter 3:9.

That repentance does not save is evidenced in the case of Judas, who repented and yet went into perdition. It is worthy to note that there are 25 passages wherein "believe," or "faith," is given as the only condition of Gentile salvation to one passage wherein repentance appears for any reason whatsoever.

It is evident from this fact that repentance, like all other issues, is almost universally omitted from the great salvation passages; that such repentance as is possible to an unsaved person in this dispensation is included in the one act of believing. The statement in 1 Thessalonians 1:9,10 may serve as an illustration. Here it is said: "Ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for His Son from heaven." This represents one all-inclusive act.

Dr. MacArthur gives us an unChristian attitude in prayer:

We have all prayed with the Psalmist, "Let the wicked perish before God" (p. 131).

No, dear brother, we have not all prayed that prayer. That prayer was acceptable from a covenant Israelite, from the only basis that he had: law-governed Adamic flesh. The Christian, not in the flesh but in the Last Adam, prays the Spirit-led prayer concerning the wicked: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Lu. 23:34).

Eternal life brings immediate death to self. "Knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin (Rom. 6:6) (p. 140). Receiving Christ does not mean we can merely add Jesus to the refuse we have accumulated. Salvation requires total transformation: "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come" (2 Cor. 5:17) (p. 183).

Here Dr. MacArthur fails to differentiate between the Christian's position, and his condition. As to "immediate death to self," and "the old things passed away, behold, new things are come," that is true of all Christians, positionally; but hardly as to their daily condition--even the most mature.

Willingness to surrender to divine authority is the driving force in the heart of every true child of the kingdom. It is the inevitable expression of the new nature (p. 140).

The author's first sentence is correct. The convert via the Gospel according to Jesus became a child of the kingdom. And divine authority will ever be the driving force in his heart--the indwelling Spirit writing the law upon his heart to enable him to surrender to the theocratic kingdom law, under his King.

But that is not the "inevitable expression of the new nature." Not at all. The inevitable expression of the new nature is the manifestation of the Lord Jesus in the Christian. He is not under authority, he is not seeking to obey--unless he is under the law as described in Romans Seven.

For him to live is Christ, and that life is not under authority; it lives by its righteous nature, by means of the indwelling Spirit of Christ. The believer lives by the "Spirit of life in Christ Jesus," which has made him "free from the law of sin and death." The flesh requires authority and law to inhibit and control it, but not the life that is Christ--which is manifested by "the fruit of the Spirit," and "against such there is no law" (Gal. 5:22,23).

The moment his [the thief on the Cross] repentance wrought faith, the Savior received him into His kingdom (p. 148).

Yes, the thief on the Cross was received into the kingdom, via the holding pattern of heaven. But he was not received into the Lord Jesus Christ as his Life--he did not become a Christian, a member of the Body of Christ. The Christian faith is not wrought by repentance, for, "by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God" (Eph. 2:8).

Paul preached the gospel according to Jesus. In fact, his defense of his apostleship was based on the claim that he received his gospel direct from Jesus (p. p. 217).

Here is the crucial area concerning Dr. MacArthur's theology, i.e., applying the Kingdom dispensation to the Church dispensation. The Gospel according to Jesus was directed to kingdom Israel. He was a "minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made to the fathers" (Rom. 15:8). And what were some of the promises made to the fathers? Jeremiah and Ezekiel tell us plainly:

"Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah.... This shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel: after those days, saith the Lord, I will put My law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be My people" (Jer. 31:31,33).

"Therefore, say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord God...I will take you from among the nations, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.

"A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and ye shall keep Mine ordinances, and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be My people, and I will be your God" (Ezek. 36:22,24-28).

Here is the description of the convert to the Gospel according to Jesus. In the millennial kingdom in the land promised to the fathers, the regenerated Jew will be cleansed from his sins, he will be given a new heart and a new spirit. God will put His Spirit within him, and cause him to walk in his statutes, and keep the ordinances of the theocratic kingdom, and do them.

The apostle Paul did not receive this Gospel of the kingdom from the ascended and glorified Lord Jesus Christ, Head of the heavenly Church. No member of the Body of the Lord Jesus has the law written on his heart, to enable him to keep the laws of the coming theocratic kingdom.

Some dispensational leaders, such as Dr. Renald Showers in his book, The New Nature, are teaching that the Christian has the law written upon his heart. But it is the Lord Jesus Christ who is written on the heart of the Christian--"the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:2).

Here is a sorely needed principle for the Church: There is nothing in all the Word concerning the Christian that exceeds, or even remotely compares with, that which our glorified Head gives us through Paul!

It is true that Paul set forth the same means (faith) of salvation as did Jesus in His preaching; but Paul was offering an altogether different Gospel. Paul wrote, "I did not prove disobedient to the heavenly vision, but kept declaring both to those of Damascus first, and also at Jerusalem, and then throughout all the region of Judea, and even to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance" (Acts 26:19,20).

And just what was the Gospel that Paul received by revelation from the glorified Lord Jesus Christ? "I made known unto you, brethren, that the Gospel which was preached by me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by revelation of Jesus Christ" (Gal. 1:11,12). "Even the mystery which hath been hidden from ages and from generations, but is now made manifest to His saints, to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:25-27).

Paul's Gospel does not write the law upon the heart, but rather the indwelling Spirit of Christ establishes the life of the Lord Jesus in the heart of the Christian, and he lives for the glory of the Father by the "law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:2).

Dr. MacArthur would take us back to the blessed Lord Jesus in His humiliation, prior to His wondrous Cross, preaching His kingdom Gospel to covenant Israel. But "except a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit" (John 12:24). Paul takes us forward, up to the ascended Lord Jesus Christ in His glory, preaching His Person--"Christ, who is our Life" (Col. 3:4).

Israel will never be a part of this heavenly Body of the Lord Jesus, which is the Church, begun on the day of Pentecost, and to be completed at the Rapture. She will have nothing at all that the Church is and has in her Head and Life. There is no comparison between the Church and Israel, glorious as the latter will be in "the regeneration," the glorious Messianic Kingdom--with the King upon David's throne with his consort Bride, the Church, reigning together over Israel and the Gentile nations.

Since this infinite distinction exists between the Church and Israel, it will ever be maintained throughout the Millennial Kingdom and on into Eternity. Forever. Nothing can be added to the then completed Body, not even regenerated Israel.

C.E. Stewart expresses the final word as to Dr. MacArthur's Jewish stress on Lordship:

To the Church, whether viewed as His Body or His Bride, the Lord Jesus is Head, not Lord. Lord, of course, He is; God made Him such (Acts 2:36) The Church knows Him as Lord; but He is Head to, not Lord of, the Church.

Headship and Lordship both belong to Him, but they are not convertible terms. As Lord, He stands apart from all others; as Head, He is in close association and communion with that to which He is as such in union. Scripture never speaks of Him as Lord in relation to the Church.

As Dr. Chafer wrote:

Christ is the Head of a New Creation, and Christians are with Him in that creation as its vital members. Israel was of the old creation and attached to the earth; the Church is of the New Creation and related to heaven.

MacARTHUR ABERRATIONS

An Open Letter to the Independent Fundamental Churches of America (IFCA)

Miles J. Stanford

November 1995

Dear IFCA friends in Christ Jesus

Over the past 50 years I have been interested in, appreciative of, and am at present deeply concerned for, the IFCA. Although not a member of the organization, I am a member of the Body of Christ.

I know that you want the Lord's best for the IFCA, and that you intend for it to be a stronghold on behalf of, and a clear and honest witness to, the Lord Jesus Christ and His Word.

The dual purpose of this letter is to set forth briefly (!) some of the aberrations of Dr. MacArthur, and to encourage you personally to consider, or re-consider, the implications and influence--both to the movement and to the Church at large--of Dr. MacArthur's membership in the IFCA.

The stated primary purpose of the IFCA during the past 40 years has been to stand for the fundamentals of the faith, and particularly Dispensationalism. With the encroachment and infiltration of legalistic Covenantism, and the Kingdom orientation of Progressive Dispensationalism, it is more essential than ever for each of us to adhere firmly and aggressively to clear-cut Pauline Dispensationalism. There would seem to be little possibility of this while in association with Dr. MacArthur's level of Dispensationalism, and his other doctrinal deviations.

DISPENSATIONALISM -- Dr. MacArthur insists that he is a dispensationalist. However, in his quarterly magazine Masterpiece (Fall 1988, page 20), he lists nine books that have made the greatest impact upon his life and ministry. All of them are written by anti-dispensational Covenantists.

In his highly controversial book, *The Gospel According to Jesus*, the author reveals his attitude toward classic Dispensationalism, as held by such leaders as Darby, Scofield, Chafer, and Ryrie:

There is a tendency for dispensationalists to get carried away with compartmentalizing truth to the point that they can make unbiblical distinctions. An almost obsessive desire to categorize everything neatly between the church and Israel, Christ's preaching and the apostolic message, faith and repentance, and the age of law and the age of grace. The age of law and the age of grace division in particular have wreaked havoc on dispensational theology and contributed to confusion about the doctrine of salvation [Lordship Salvation, that is].

It is a mistake of the worst sort to set the teachings of Paul and the apostles over against the words of our Lord and imagine that they contradict one another [they do not] or speak of different dispensations [they do] (p. 214).

In his Introduction, the author states:

I came to see Jesus' gospel as the foundation upon which all NT doctrine stands (p. 15).

This is certainly Covenant orientation on the part of Dr. MacArthur--to shun Paul and the heaven-based Church Epistles, for the earthly kingdom Gospel of Jesus to the nation of Israel!

In his later, and equally anti-dispensational book titled Faith Works--The Gospel According to the Apostles, the author favorably quotes no less than 22 Covenant writers, in support of his Lordship Salvation thesis. In both of these books he is highly critical of dispensational writers such as Darby, Scofield, Chafer, Larkin, and Ryrie.

In this book (p. 231) Dr. MacArthur accuses me of teaching two ways of salvation. In all of my writings I have stated carefully and clearly that there is but one way of salvation, i.e., [by grace through] faith based upon the Cross of Christ, but two kinds of salvation: 1) the out-of-Christ, earthly/heavenly kingdom salvation for the nation of Israel and the Gentile nations; 2) the heavenly in-Christ salvation, exclusively for the Church, the heavenly Body of Christ.

ISRAEL'S NEW COVENANT -- There is further evidence of Dr. MacArthur's lack of distinction between Israel and the Church in his handling of Israel's future millennial-kingdom New Covenant, as prophesied in Jeremiah and Ezekiel. First, in his NT Commentary on Hebrews, he states correctly:

God never made a covenant with the Gentiles. The New Covenant is not made with the Church (p. 213).

But two pages later comes a contradiction:

The Spirit writes God's law in the minds and hearts of those who belong to Him. In the New Covenant true worship is internal, not external (p. 215) -

Jesus is the Mediator of the New Covenant, and in this has provided us with eternal life. All of God's promises in the New Covenant are guaranteed to us by Jesus Christ Himself (p. 198).

We are born again--regenerated--given a new heart, a new spirit, and a new love for God (Ezek. 36:26) The Vanishing Conscience, p. 137).

We have a new heart--not an added one, but a whole different one. This after all is the promise of the New Covenant (Ezek. 26:26) (Ibid. , p. 218).

REGENERATION -- Speaking of regeneration, Dr. MacArthur teaches here the Covenant error, which requires one to be regenerated, brought to life, in order to believe unto life. In other words, being saved in order to be saved.

The unsaved are dead, incapable of any spiritual activity. Until God quickens us, we have no capacity to respond to Him in faith. Believing is therefore the first act of an awakened spiritual corpse; it is the new man breathing his first breath (Faith Works, pp. 67,69).

Dr. Samuel Ridout stood against this error:

"Being born again [regenerated] , not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible seed, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever" (1 Pet. 1:23). It is being taught that new birth precedes faith, but here we are told that the Word of God is the instrument in the new birth. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God"; "the Word by the Gospel is preached." John 3:3 and 3:16 must ever go together. There is no anomaly possible as a man born again, but who has not yet believed the Gospel.

[For a more detailed discussion, see Sovereignty Plus Responsibility]

ONE-NATURISM-ERADICATION -- Dr. MacArthur's reference above to the believer being an awakened spiritual corpse brings us to his Covenant teaching of the death of the "old man," i.e., "one-naturism."

By definition a corpse is a dead body, from which the ever-living life of the person has departed. However, death is separation, never extinction!

The old self has been made a corpse; and a corpse has in it no remaining vestige of life. The old man, the old self, is the unregenerated person (NT Commentary on Romans, p. 318).

In his taped message (GC 2147), Dr. MacArthur states:

You aren't an old man any more and you don't have an old man any more. The moment we believe in Christ, by a divine miracle, our old life died.

As Christians, our old life has been condemned, crucified, and done away with. The old life is gone. In fact, in Romans 6:6, it says, "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin (which is synonymous with the old man) might be destroyed." In other words, the old man is dead, destroyed, removed... it isn't around.

It is true of every genuine believer that our old self is dead. If the old self isn't dead, conversion has not occurred (Faith Works, p. 116).

This eradication error is spawned by Covenantism's taking Romans 6:1-10 to be actual, instead of positional. Covenantism is in ignorance of positional truth.

Death Means Separation -- Death means neither extinction, nor cessation; it always means separation. Physical death is the separation of the immaterial part of man from the material body. It does not mean that the person has become extinct, nor that he has ceased to function.

KINGDOM LIVING HERE AND NOW -- When Dr. MacArthur can say that "Jesus' gospel is the foundation upon which all NT doctrine stands," he is certainly not speaking as a Dispensationalist, but rather as a Covenantist. And that is why he could write a book titled Kingdom Living Here and Now, which centers the Christian life in the Sermon on the Mount. To center in the Sermon means inevitable emigration to the Millennial Kingdom, in company with the Israelites, the Covenantists, and the Progressive Dispensationalists.

If you want to be happy, if you want to be filled with the Spirit... just master the Sermon on the Mount and put it into practice (p. 34).

As Mr. Darby wrote, "Try away, try away!" Dr. Charles Feinberg said, "The NT up to the Cross is Jewish all the way."

Historically, some evangelicals have objected to the Sermon on the Mount on the ground that it is too difficult. For instance, when Christ says in Matthew 5:48, "you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect," they say that's too hard and pass it off on the Millennium. They say the Sermon must be principles for kingdom life. But frankly, there are many problems with this view.

First, the text does not say this is for the Millennium. Second, Jesus preached it to people who were not living in the Millennium. Third, it becomes confusing if you push it into the Millennium because it says you are blessed when you are persecuted for righteousness' sake and when men revile and persecute you and say evil things against you falsely. Who is going to get away with that in the kingdom? (p. 40).

Dr. Chafer wrote, in his Systematic Theology IV:346:

It has been objected that such stipulations as "Resist not evil," "Whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek," "Whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile," and "persecuted for righteousness' sake" could not be possible in the millennial kingdom.

This challenge may be based upon the supposition that the earthly millennial kingdom is to be as morally perfect as heaven. On the contrary, the Scriptures abundantly testify that, while there will be far less occasion to sin, for the sufficient reason that Satan is then bound in a pit and the glorious King is on His throne, there will be need of immediate execution of judgment and justice on earth, and even the King shall rule, of necessity, with a "rod of iron."

In his NT Commentary on Matthew, Dr. MacArthur further states:

The teachings of the Sermon on the Mount are for believers today, marking the distinctive lifestyle that should characterize the direction, if not the perfection, of the lives of Christians in every age (p. 138).

ADOPTION -- In his book Our Sufficiency in Christ, Dr. MacArthur speaks of adoption, in error:

We were chosen for adoption into God's family before the world began (Eph. 1: 4, 5). With our adoption came all the rights and privileges of family membership (p. 40).

It is the same in The Church, the Body of Christ:

God loved us so much that He made us His children, the closest He could possibly get us to Himself, adopting us into His family. God formed a body in eternity past and chose some to be adopted into His family (pp. 42, 43) .

Ephesians 1:4 states that "He [God] hath chosen us in Him [Christ] before the foundation of the world." Adoption can never give one a union within a family. The Christian's relationship to the Father is one of spiritual birth, a recreation of life and nature--infinitely beyond the bounds of adoption, spiritual or otherwise.

Our birth into Christ as our life included the legal adoption of sonship, but it is not adoption into Christ, or the family of God. That requires birth; and that closeness is beyond comparison with adoption of any kind.

The New Scofield Reference Bible note, page 1272, makes that clear:

"Adoption" is not so much a word of relationship as of position. In regeneration a Christian receives the nature of a child of God; in adoption he receives the legal position of a son of God.

Every Christian obtains the place of a child and a right to be called a son the moment he believes. The indwelling Spirit gives the realization of this in the Christian's present experience; but the full manifestation of his adult sonship awaits the resurrection, change, and translation [Rapture] of saints.

LORDSHIP SALVATION -- Pastor George Zeller shares this telling contrast:

Lordship Salvation teachers say that believing on the Lord Jesus Christ involves the following:

It means surrender to His Lordship..

It means submitting to His authority and to His Word.

It means obeying His commands, or at least a willingness to obey.

It means fully accepting all the terms of discipleship.

It is not what the sinner does for God in order to be saved, but rather what God has done for the sinner that saves. Consequently:

It is because I am saved that I surrender to His Lordship.

It is because I am saved that I follow Him in willing obedience.

It is because I am saved that I agree to the terms of discipleship.

It is because I am saved that I submit to His authority.

--Compilation of the Teachings of John MacArthur Jr., ("Lordship Salvation," P. 10)

It must be said that Dr. MacArthur's Lordship Salvation is a child of Covenant theology; it is an interpolation. It is not the childlike faith in the grace of John 3:16. It rightly insists upon repentance, but wrongly interjects a change of behavior--one must bring forth fruits (works) for repentance (Lu. 3:8) in order to be saved.

No one questions that there must be a sincere change of mind, a turning from one's self to the Saviour, but Lordship advocates attempt to make behavior and fruit essential ingredients of, rather than evidence of, saving faith. Scripture teaches that the Savior saves "the ungodly" (Rom. 5:6) in their sin, and believers from their sin (Gal. 5:16).

CHILD SALVATION -- Dr. MacArthur's Lordship Salvation causes him to teach the following concerning child salvation. On September 25, 1990, at Calvary Baptist Church in Brewer, Maine (Rev. Larry Pawson, pastor), Dr. MacArthur was involved in a question and answer session which was publicly taped. During the session he said the following as to child salvation:

Now let me say this, and I don't want you to panic when I say it. Saving faith is an adult issue. Saving faith is an adult experience. Saving faith is an adult experience. Am I saying that a child cannot be saved?

I'm saying that salvation is a conscious turning from sin to follow Jesus Christ with an understanding of something of the sinfulness of sin, its consequences and something of who Jesus Christ is, what He has provided and that I'm committing my life to Him.

At what point can a child understand that? I tell parents that salvation is an adult decision. There is no illustration in Scripture of childhood salvation. There is none. People want to throw in the Philippian jailer and his household; well, that's talking about his servants, so there is no reference there about his children. So there is no such thing as a childhood conversion.

The Savior taught that to be saved adults must become as little children (Matt. 18:3). Dr. MacArthur teaches that to be saved, little children must become as adults. In the meantime, young or old, it is "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31).

THE BLOOD -- Dr. MacArthur has needlessly caused a sad and harmful controversy throughout the Church during the past 25 years or so, by giving precedence to the Lord Jesus' death over His shed Blood, in relation to our salvation.

It is not only the error, but his attitude toward Christ's Blood that is so shameful and causes so much heartache among conscientious believers. Dr. MacArthur relegates the precious Blood of Christ to a symbol status:

It is possible to become morbid about Christ's sacrificial death and preoccupied with His suffering and shedding of blood. It is not Jesus' physical blood that saves us, but His dying on our behalf, which is symbolized by the shedding of His physical blood (Hebrews, p. 237).

Blood is a symbol of death. The purpose of the blood was to symbolize sacrifice for sin. We need to keep in mind that the blood was a symbol (emphasis mine) (*Ibid.*, p. 237).

The Lord Jesus' death is no more critical than His shed Blood. As to our salvation, they are one. In relation to our being saved, reconciled, etc., the NT mentions His Blood at least five times more often than His death.

The Blood of the Lamb was more than a symbol, or a "demonstration," of His death on the Cross! In an open letter of October 2, 1986, Dr. MacArthur wrote:

The literal blood of Christ ran into the dust and dirt. If Christ had not bled, salvation would not have been purchased. In that sense it is not His blood but His death that saves us. And

when Scripture talks about the shedding of blood, the point is not bleeding, but dying by violence as a sacrifice.

Dr. MacArthur may emphasize His death, and minimize His Blood, but the Word of God emphasizes and glorifies His shed Blood.

"The Blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin." "In whom we have redemption through His Blood, even the forgiveness of sins." "Being now justified by His Blood. "By His own Blood He entered into the Holy Place, having obtained eternal redemption for us" (1 John 1:7; Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14; Heb. 9:12).

Whether He presented to His Father His literal Blood that was shed on the Cross, or whether it was spiritually presented, the Word does not indicate. The point is that the ascended Lord Jesus Christ Himself could not enter the Father's glorious presence without His shed Blood. His presentation to the Father was accepted, and His place is forever there in the Holiest of All, "seated on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens" (Heb. 8:1).

By virtue of that same Blood, we are positioned there before the Father. "But now in Christ Jesus ye who once were far off are made nigh by the Blood of Christ." "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the Holiest by the Blood of Jesus" (Eph. 2:13; Heb. 10:19).

We do not have access to our Father's presence by a representation, nor a symbolization of His death, but by the precious Blood itself. The early Plymouth Brethren leader, Mr. L.J. Harris, wrote:

Our heavenly Father is not only jealous of His own personal holiness, and so provides for the personal cleanliness of those whom He brings into His presence; but He is also jealous of the purity of heaven itself, His dwelling place.

Hence heaven is also purified by the Blood, and the entrance of sinners into it may in no wise defile it. And it greatly assures the priestly worshipper to find that they themselves are purified forever by that same Blood, which thus preserves the purity of God's own Home and Throne.

One purification by the Blood of Christ avails for all--God's throne, God's temple, God's High Priest, and God's saints and priests.

ASSURANCE -- In his book, *Saved Without a Doubt: How to be Sure of Your Salvation*, Dr. MacArthur's "assurance" is founded upon the Covenant teaching that one must persevere in holiness unto the very end. This is actually saying that there is no true assurance of salvation until the very last moment of life. And for him it is not just a matter of perseverance in faith, but also of good works!

The last two-thirds of the author's book is devoted to the subjective Covenant teaching concerning perseverance, where he bases assurance upon tests of salvation (1 John), growth in Christ (2 Pet. 1), victory over sin (Rom. 6-8), and perseverance (James 1:12). Some of the author's tests of assurance are:

Have you experienced communion with God and Christ? Have you sensed their presence?

If you desire to obey the Word out of gratitude for what Christ has done for you, and if you see that desire producing an overall pattern of obedience, you have passed an important test indicating the presence of saving faith (p. 75).

If you have made a proper commitment to the Lord, you can be assured that the Holy Spirit will enable you to persevere to the end (p. 152).

There is this in his Kingdom Living Here and Now:

Eternal security is a great spiritual truth, but it should never be presented merely as a matter of being once saved, always saved--with no regard for what you believe or do. The writer of Hebrews 12:14 states frankly that only those who continue living holy lives will enter the Lord's presence (p. 150).

I can neither hear nor heed this Covenant-oriented leader because, with all other believers, I have already been raised up ... and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:6). In His holiness, righteousness, and Life, my life is "hidden with Christ in God [now]" (Col. 3:3).

Mr. C.A. Coates assures:

Divine love takes everything into consideration--knows what the world is, knows what we are, and loves to the end. You may say, "I find so many things to hinder." Do you think you have found something your sovereign Lord overlooked in His finished work? No! He sees all, knows all, and loves to the end!

About the time Dr. MacArthur wrote Saved Without a Doubt he spoke at a large Evangelical Conference. While on the platform before some 500 pastors he was questioned as follows:

Question: In light of 2 Corinthians 13:5, is examining ourselves to see if we are in the faith something that we as believers are to do regularly, throughout our lives?

MacArthur: Yes, we are to examine ourselves on an ongoing basis. Of course, this has relevance to assurance.

Question: When, then, can a believer be 100% sure that he has passed the test?

MacArthur: I'm not sure what you mean by 100%.

Questioner: I mean absolutely, positively sure.

MacArthur: Puritan writers [!] said that such absolute assurance was not possible. We can have assurance, but not absolute certainty.

So much for the authenticity of the book and its title! The author's "sure" is sans surety.

INCARNATIONAL SONSHIP -- Dr. MacArthur denies that the Lord Jesus Christ was the Son of God in eternity prior to His incarnation. [John MacArthur has formally retracted his erroneous teaching in this area. > Chick Here <] In saying that, he also denies that God was

Father in eternity past. On pages 27 and 29 in his NT Commentary on Hebrews, the author states:

Son is an incarnational title of Christ. He was always God, but He became Son. His Sonship began at a point of time, not in eternity. His life as Son began in this world.... He was not a son until He was born into this world through the virgin birth. Christ's Sonship is only an analogy to allow the human mind to comprehend His willing submission to the Father for the sake of our redemption.

Our brother claims that Christ's Sonship is but a role that He assumed at the incarnation, and not before. He insists that "Son of God" is merely a title he acquired, a role He played, a name He took on, and a function He assumed at the time of the incarnation.

This total denial robs the Lord Jesus of being truly, actually, intrinsically, and eternally the Beloved Son of the Father! He also denies God's eternal Fatherhood, saying, "It wasn't a Father/Son relationship in eternity."

Despite the above deviations Dr. MacArthur has annually signed the IFCA Doctrinal Statement, with the required "hearty agreement." This in the face of the IFCA Doctrinal Statement which declares: "We believe in one Triune God, eternally existing in three Persons--Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, became Man, without ceasing to be God."

In full support of the historic IFCA doctrinal statement and its declarations regarding the Eternal Sonship of Christ, a group of IFCA men issued the following public statement:

We are obligated to hold firmly to our Doctrinal Statement as an accurate expression of the truth of God. We cannot and must not accommodate, tolerate or allow contrary positions. Any member of the IFCA who denies the Eternal Sonship of Christ is out of harmony with our doctrinal position and he must be denied membership in our Fellowship.

Contrary to this, the IFCA leadership concludes that this denial of Eternal Sonship is not out of harmony with the IFCA Doctrinal Statement!

For a clear and comprehensive refutation of the Incarnational Sonship error, see *The Eternal Sonship of Christ--A Timely Defense of This Vital Doctrine*, by Pastor George Zeller and Dr. Renald Showers. (You may order from the publisher, Loizeaux Brothers, toll free -- 1-800-526-2796.)

One cannot help but admire Dr. John MacArthur Jr. His worldwide influence and literary achievements are remarkable.

But, dear friend, it must be remembered that doctrine is thicker than blood. "It is better to be divided by truth than to be united by error. If any are to be called divisive for their doctrinal beliefs, then it should be those who deny the orthodox doctrines of the Word, rather than those who affirm them."

The peerless Paul is our man: "Mark them who cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them" (Rom. 16:17).

"Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly and not after the tradition which ye received of us And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother" (2 Thess. 3:6,14,15).

Yours for His best.

Resting in Him,

Miles

FAITH WORKS

The Gospel According to the Apostles
An Open Letter to John F. MacArthur, Jr.

Miles J. Stanford

15 March 1993

Dr. John F. MacArthur, Jr.

P. O. Box 1642

Canyon Country, CA 91351

Dear brother John

We were concerned to hear of your wife's serious and traumatic incident (not accident). Your up-to-date account in FAITH WORKS: The Gospel According to the Apostles is very heartening. With you, we are very thankful to the Lord that she is recovering well.

There is no question as to the extreme hardship you are all undergoing in the long recuperation process, and the example of your family faith is an edifying testimony to many. A wonderful deepening of family heart-bonds. I especially admire your ability to write this book in the midst of it, as I have enough difficulty in writing one under the most propitious of conditions.

My purpose in writing to you is not to critique your FAITH WORKS book; I trust other dispensationalists will have the doctrinal convictions to adequately accomplish this. In that I care about you as a younger brother in Christ (near 80 here), and am concerned about your widespread ministry to His Body, there are some things I would like to touch upon in a kindly and scriptural manner.

I am not offended, but there is an error on page 232 of your book that ought to be rectified--at least for your information. You mention that I advocate "multiple ways of salvation." I can see how that could have happened, but I am glad to say that the statement on page 1 of my critique of your book, The Gospel According to Jesus, is otherwise, as follows:

On the ground that the author takes (Covenant Israel), he is right concerning Lordship Salvation. The problem is, he is on the wrong ground; the dispensation of law! What our brother neither sees nor understands, and he is by no means alone, is that there are not two ways, but two distinctly different kinds of salvation. Yet both have the same blessed source, the finished work of the Cross--both are entered by faith.

However (there goes the other shoe), I do insist that there are "two distinctly different kinds of salvation."

Salvation #1 -- The Lord Jesus, as Israel's Messiah and King, preached His "Kingdom Gospel"--as did John the Baptist before Him, and the disciples with Him--to the nation of Israel. This was during His humiliation, prior to the Cross. His believing disciples (not yet

Christian) were in expectation of the long-awaited Kingdom. After the Cross and just before His ascension, they asked Him, "Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6). Although He did not give them the answer, He did not correct their query.

The content--the components of this Kingdom Gospel--are set forth in Israel's New Covenant (Jer. 31; Ezek. 36). That is, the recipients of this Covenant Kingdom Gospel will have their iniquities forgiven, they will receive a new spirit and a new heart, they will be indwelt by the Spirit of God who will write the Kingdom law upon their hearts, by which the Spirit will cause them to keep the Kingdom ordinances and do them. They will live in the earthly Kingdom forever, under their Messiah/King--but will not be members of the Body of Christ.

Salvation #2 -- After the Cross, in His new-creation ascension and glorification, the Lord Jesus Christ, as Saviour, Lord, Head, Bridegroom, and Life, ministered His heavenly Gospel of the grace of God to Paul, exclusively for His Bride, His Body, His Church--born at Pentecost.

On page 222 you equate the salvation of earthly Israel with that of the totally unique and heavenly Church:

Many dispensationalists, myself included [and all Covenant theologians] agree that there is some continuity between OT and NT people of God in that we share a common salvation purchased by Jesus Christ and appropriated by grace through faith.

The heavenly Gospel, from the heavenly Christ to the heavenly Church, is referred to by Paul as "my Gospel" (Rom. 16:25); the "Gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:24); and "the Gospel of His [glorified] Son" (Rom. 1:9). Paul never refers to his message to the Gentiles as "the Gospel of the Kingdom."

As Dr. Wm. R. Newell said:

Take Romans to Philemon out of the Bible and you are bereft of Christian doctrine. Take Paul's Epistles out of the Bible, and you cannot find anything about the Church, for no other Apostle ever mentions the Body of Christ.

You cannot find the exact meaning of any of the great doctrines, such as Propitiation, Reconciliation, Justification, Identification, Redemption, or Sanctification. Nor can you find what is perhaps the most tremendous fact of every Christian life, that of personal union with the Lord Jesus Christ at the right hand of the Father in glory.

Paul's Gospel produces the new-creation man--a man in Christ before the Father, with Christ living in him (Gal. 2:20). He is baptized into Christ's Body (1 Cor. 12:13), and joined in living union with the ascended Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 6:17; Gal 3:27). He has died unto sin (Rom. 6:11), the law (Gal. 2:19), and the world (Gal. 6:14).

He has been made "complete in Christ" (Col. 2:10), and is "accepted in the Beloved" (Eph. 1:6). He is crucified, dead, buried, and ascended with Christ in the heavenlies (Eph. 2:6), a "citizen of heaven" (Phil. 3:20), and is "blessed with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ" (Eph. 1:3).

Being in the ascended Lord Jesus, his life hidden with Christ in God, he has been made nigh by the Blood of Christ (Col. 3:3; Eph. 2:13). He has "boldness to enter into the Holiest by the Blood of Jesus" (Heb. 10:19). When Christ returns to earth to establish His Millennial Kingdom, to both judge Israel with the "baptism of fire," and afterwards bless them with their New Covenant, every risen and glorified member of His Body, His Bride, will attend the Bridegroom/King to rule with Him over the earth.

All of the above pertains to the Christian--none of which will ever be true of the recipient of Jesus' Kingdom Gospel--the kingdom Jew.

Dispensationalism -- What sort of dispensationalist would I be if I failed to acknowledge the difference the Cross makes between an earthly and heavenly people? Your failure to make a distinction between these two salvations puts quite a strain on your insistence that you are a dispensationalist. Let's just grant that you are, as you say. Not as strict, of course, as Darby, or Scofield, or Chafer, but evidently more along the latitudinal lines of Dallas, and the Bock-Blaising Progressive Dispensationalism or, what I have termed, Neo-Dispensationalism.

But your associations belie even that. How can you creditably teach and lead others along dispensational lines when you almost exclusively quote with approval anti-dispensational Covenant theologians in your books? To say nothing of joining hands with them in speaking conferences. In your first Lordship book 29 of them are utilized, while in this present book you present us with no less than 19 of Covenant's best: Berghof, Brooks, Calvin, Chantry, Gerstner, Hodge, Hockema, Leighton, Lloyd-Jones, Machan, Manton, Moule, Murray, Owen, Pink, the Puritans, Ryle, Sproul, and Warfield.

What are people to think about you? Where is your leadership responsibility regarding your purported dispensationalism? What if I were to lard my books with approving quotes from the likes of TV's: Roberts, Swaggart, Robinson, Tilton, Lee, Hinn, Hagin, or Copeland? Or Fuller's Wagner and Kraft, Biola's Kwast and Louwers, Moody's Dickason, Trinity's Grudem and Warner, along with Wimber and Hayford?

Your association with Jack Hayford may seem ever so innocent and interesting, but you have responsibility to a tongue-vulnerable Church. You certainly should back up the stand of your book Charismatic Chaos. I would think by now you have received an inscribed copy of Hayford's latest book, The Beauty of Spiritual Language. As you may have noted, it is a strong pitch for "pseudotongues," and certainly has the potential for enticing many more into the present-day charismatic chaos that has long plagued and devastated the Body.

Regeneration -- Your present book contains another telling indication of your Covenant orientation. Step by step you are being "Reformed." I refer to your use of the terms "quicken," and "awakened," on pages 67 and 69:

The unsaved are dead, incapable of any spiritual activity. Until God quickens us, we have no capacity to respond to Him in faith. Believing is therefore the first act of an awakened spiritual corpse; it is the new man drawing his first breath.

Without going into the issue, this is Covenant teaching that one must be saved in order to be saved. No personal responsibility involved. Covenant's Westminster Confession of Faith 10.1 sets forth the teaching:

This effectual call is of God's free and special grace alone, not from anything at all foreseen in man; who is altogether passive therein, until, being quickened and renewed by the Holy Spirit, he is thereby enabled to answer this call, and to embrace the grace offered and conveyed in it.

Just the briefest of thoughts concerning this. A spiritually dead, corpse-like man is capable of seeing God's truth, and is held responsible for it. If not, God would not hold him responsible. A corpse is a separated body; the person ever lives:

"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God" (Rom. 1:18-21).

One-Naturism -- You state on page 120 that "we cannot have two contradictory natures at the same time." Your teaching that the believer has but one nature is primarily a Covenant error, all of whom teach it. The Wesleyan people, instead of eradicating the Adamic nature (old man), as you do, keep the nature and eradicate the sin.

If you were to hold positional truth in higher esteem it would help you to understand that Romans 6:1-10 has to do with position. The indwelling old Adamic man was judicially crucified, thereby enabling the Holy Spirit to hold it inoperative via our faith, our reckoning ourselves to have died to it. Freedom from the power of indwelling sin is not via struggle or rule (law), but by faith in the finished work of the Cross, in reliance upon the Holy Spirit.

When you replace the Adamic old man with "vestiges of our sinful flesh" (p. 30), or "graveclothes of sinful flesh" (P. 117), or "residual falleness" (p. 134), it becomes increasingly difficult for the believer to take personal responsibility for the sins in his life. As a result his confession becomes impersonal, and begins to wane. In more and more instances 1 John 1: 9 is simply being forsaken.

The result can be seen in the one-naturism of Bob George--sans confession. It has also developed in the one-nature Neuer Leben, International movement in Phoenix, soon to be called Total Life, International. Their conference manual, incidentally, contains 12 diagrams featured in Charles Solomon's books. It is considered an "affront to God" to confess sins that He has already forgiven.

Death -- Surely you must realize that death does not mean extinction or cessation, but that it always means separation. Every sinner is spiritually dead, while at the same time existing and active; he is separated from God. That is what crucifixion and death mean in Romans Six--separation. But I, as a new creation in Christ, am positionally separated from him via my death to sin at Calvary. It is on that basis I reckon my self dead indeed to sin.

Lordship Conversion -- Although I consider your Lordship teaching concerning initial faith to be an issue, I don't think it is the issue concerning your ministry. All I will say about your initial faith-demands is this:

Repentance -- With you, I believe in repentance. "Repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:21). Repentance is a change of mind Godward. When I was saved (September 19, 1940, 4:30 p.m.), by exercising simple faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as a Person, I turned from my sinful self to Him. The repentance you call for on page 33 is too inclusivistic, making a result of conversion its necessary ingredient. If you had only waited a moment!

Therefore sinners cannot come to sincere faith apart from a complete change of heart, a turnaround of the mind and affections and will. That is repentance (p. 33). (Emphasis mine.)

Would you say that was totally true of your conversion, and of all your converts, as well as all of your church members, and all of your Lordship followers? I, for one, lost out almost completely there!

Lordship Sanctification -- I think the primary issue, the real breakdown of your message, is the post-conversion application of Lordship to sanctification. One might refer to that motivation as the adolescent stage of the Christian life. The Lordship principle is mainly found in the law realm of the Synoptics. It is the stage where believers try to do for the Lord; to one degree or another, it is the Romans Seven struggle. That is as far as they see, and they tragically think that is the way the Christian life should be. Anything short of that is considered to be an unsaved condition; anything beyond, antinomianism.

The eighth chapter of your book is titled "The Death Struggle With Sin." At the outset (p. 123) you quote J.I. Packer, who is typical of all Covenant theologians:

The form that sanctification takes is conflict with the indwelling sin that constantly assaults us. The conflict, which is lifelong, involves both resistance to sin's assaults and the counterattack of sanctification, whereby we seek to drain the life out of this troublesome enemy (Hot Tub Religion, p. 172).

Here the power and character and source of sin are unknown. Personal conflict will never overcome sin, and certainly it is futile, if not foolish, to try to "drain the life out of it." Not even honest prayer can weaken it. The work of the Cross alone (and it required that) could break the power of sin, and has already done so.

The eighth chapter of your book, Saved Without a Doubt, is titled "Gaining Victory." It is an example of the juvenile law-oriented believer struggling to deal with symptoms, instead of the source--sin. But then, if the source is nothing but a trace of residual sin, there is not much to deal with. On page 137 you say:

Let's face it: All of us could be killing more of our personal sins than we are. The crucial question to ask yourself is, "How do I kill sin in my life?" Here are some practical steps for establishing a pattern of victory in your life.

The way to kill sin in your life is to feed it Scripture. [Which Scripture?] It's a foolproof poison against the weed of sin (p. 139). Honest prayers are a preservative against sin. They expose secret sins and weaken prevailing sins (p. 140).

If you want to engage in a real battle with sin, just set your course day by day, moment by moment, and step by step on a path of obedience to God's Word. [Which portion?] At first it will seem hard and progress will seem slow, but if you stay with it obedience will become habitual (p. 140).

If you deal confidently and consistently with the sin in your life, you will experience the effect of righteousness, which Isaiah 32:17 defines as everlasting assurance and security (p. 141).

All of this is in the realm of Lordship law--seeking to do something about sin, struggling to deal directly with symptom-sins. But that is as futile as the Romans Seven "O wretched man" struggle, because "the strength of sin is the law" (1 Cor. 15:56). The middle-grounder does not yet realize that "ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ" (Rom. 7:4). Hence in his legal struggles and lack of doctrinal knowledge (even if he does know he does not rest therein), he is unable to reckon himself as having died unto sin (Rom. 6:11). You cannot do both--struggle, and reckon by faith!

From Lordship to Life -- Dear Ruth Paxson shared what is unknown, or unacceptable, to those in the Lordship realm. In her monumental Life on the Highest Plane, she sets forth the scriptural sequence of spiritual progress: "From Saviour, to Lord, to Life." This classic is "antinomiously" based upon the position of the ascended believer (which all are), and includes the two indwelling Adams.

However, you are not too far behind a true spiritual-growth schedule. A fine dispensational pastor has, in the past several years, awakened to the positional (identification) life truths of the Word, via Paul. He is preaching (not yet sharing) position from his pulpit, and also among IFCA leaders--and this after 35 years in the ministry, doctorate and all. But he would not, nor does he have to, retreat to Lordship for either conversion or sanctification.

In my first book of some 30 years ago (late start) I listed some outstanding leaders of the past. They "averaged 15 years after they entered upon their ministry before they began to know the Lord Jesus as their Life, ceased trying to work for Him, and began allowing Him to be their All to do His work (via the Spirit) through them."

These individuals were, on the basis of their written testimony: Pierson, Chapman, Tauler, Goforth, Mueller, Taylor, Watt, Trumbull, Meyer, A. Murray, Havergal, Guyon, Mabie, Gordon, Hyde, Mantle, McConkey, Deck, Paxson, Stoney, Saphir, Carmichael, and Hopkins. There are many more, of course.

I appreciate what you included concerning Romans Six, etc., in your seventh chapter, "Free of Sins, Slaves of Righteousness." It is similar to what Dr. Chafer included in his Systematic Theology, what is in the Scofield Reference Bible Notes, and that which is all through the voluminous writings of John Darby and his fellow Brethren--such as Kelly, Stoney, Coates, Mackintosh, Bellett, Chapman, Grant, Wigram, and many other of those giants of the faith. The only difference is that the ministry of all of the above was based upon position, including

the two indwelling Adams, with no Lordship as a condition for either conversion or sanctification.

Others mention Romans Six, position in Christ, etc., but their ministries are not based upon these truths--such as Gothard, who includes identification but his work is non-dispensationally law-oriented; and David Wilkerson, who has taken on the identification truths while maintaining a chaotic charismatic ministry. Then there are some of the demon caster-outers, such as Neil Anderson, late of Biola, and Fred Dickason, long of Moody, who profess identification while exorcising "demons" from members of the Body of Christ.

If you are going to progress (grow) beyond Jesus' Kingdom Gospel to earthly Israel, you are going to have to enter into the heavenly Gospel of the Grace of God that He gave to Paul from glory. That is neither found in the OT, nor the Synoptics (including the Sermon on the Mount and the so-called Lord's Prayer), but primarily in the Pauline Epistles--all of them.

There is nothing that the Lord Jesus set forth in the Sermon on the Mount that he did not give on a higher spiritual level through Paul to the Church--the difference between earth and the flesh, as over against heaven and the re-Created spirit. He is not honored by our lingering on the earthly Kingdom level. "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth" (Col. 3:2). Abide above!

You cannot turn to your Covenant compeers for this. They don't have it and, what is more, they won't have it--nor will they have you. I believe that the reason why Covenant Theology stops short of position, and heavenly grace for sanctification, is that they are blinded by the very law they would have as their "rule of life"! It is rather a rule of death (2 Cor. 3:7). The law is meant to bring one to Christ--Christ glorified as heavenly Head to the heavenly Body--not to Jesus and His pre-Cross Kingdom Gospel to Israel. On that basis the law blinds and binds the member of the Body of Christ.

You can continue to love and honor God's holy and righteous law, without being under it, or trying to keep it. You don't have to fear antinomianism or lawlessness. How can you be under, or have that written upon your heart, which you have died to at Calvary?

"But now we are delivered from the law, having died to that in which we were held, that we should serve in newness of spirit and not in the oldness of the letter" (Rom. 7:6). "For the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life" (2 Cor. 3:6).

"That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us [not by struggles, or certain steps], who walk ... after the Spirit" (Rom. 8:4).

Now that should satisfy any law-lover! What is the ministry of the indwelling Spirit to a member of the heavenly Body of Christ? It is certainly not law--that He will write on the heart of the Kingdom Jew. It is Christ!--crucified, buried, risen, ascended, and glorified. He is Head and Life of the Church, which is, individually, of His very flesh and bones (Eph. 5:30), one spirit with Him, of His very human-divine life and nature (Col. 3:4).

"For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death" (Rom. 8:2). "This I say then, walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh" (Gal. 5:16).

Now to get back to the blindness of the law upon the "Covenanters." (Never did see that rabbit!)

"But if the ministration of death, written and engraved in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance, which glory was to be done away [at the Cross], how shall not the ministration of the Spirit be more glorious?" (2 Cor. 3:7,8).

The Holy Spirit's ministration in the believer is the glorified Lord Jesus Christ.

"But their minds were blinded; for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which veil is done away in Christ. But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart. Nevertheless, when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away" (2 Cor. 3:14-16).

If we have turned to the Lord, the blindness of the law is taken away so that we may be free to gaze upon the Source of grace and truth. You cannot be occupied with Moses and his law and, at the same time, be occupied with the risen and glorified Lord Jesus Christ.

"If [since] ye, then, be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ [and you] sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God" (Col. 3:1-3).

"Now the Lord is that Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty" (2 Cor. 3:17).

The Lord is in the Glory, and the Spirit's ministration is to focus the believer, soul and spirit, upon Him. To walk in the Spirit is to be centered in Christ glorified, in fellowship and worship.

"But we all [that's us] with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory [progressive growth] even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. 3:18).

"For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shone in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 4:6).

And how is that glorious image developed in us and manifested as our Christian life? Simply via the fruit of the Spirit, which is the manifestation of the characteristics of the Lord Jesus' human-divine life. Against that life there is no law--nothing is necessary but faith, and it is all spiritually natural, effortless outflow via the Spirit. To try to produce that fruit would be like hanging baubles on a Christmas tree.

That is why I shocked and outraged you, John, by maintaining that the Christian life does not require legal obedience and submission. All that is required is loving fellowship and worship with the Father and the Son--in spirit, positionally, abiding There in the Holiest before the Throne.

Surely you would not denigrate these truths as "all the follies that have ever defiled dispensationalism," as "blatant antinomianism," and "something that should be abandoned"!

You are burdened about the carnal condition of the Church, much of which you would blame upon the faithful dispensationalist, Dr. Chafer. It is a shame that you treat him in such a contumelious manner. His doctrinal contribution to the Body of Christ is something that few will ever touch. You are not alone in your concern for the Church. The Lord has His thousands out here who are just as insightful and heart-heavy as you are.

His beloved Bride must be shown deference, and treated royally as bespeaks her heavenly position. She must not be held back to an earthly level by Lordship, and the bondage and blindness of the least bit of law. She needs to be escorted to her glorified position in her Bridegroom, now. Anything less than that simply contributes to her present delinquency--a dereliction mainly due to deficient leadership.

"Stand fast, therefore, in the [heavenly] liberty with which Christ [at Calvary] hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the [Lordship] yoke of bondage" (Gal. 5:1).

I'll close with an uplifting word from William Kelly, scholarly editor of John Darby's works:

You and I who believe are "in Him," seen and accepted before our Father, "in the Beloved." "As is the earthly, such are they also that are heavenly." The full image of it we have not yet, it is true. That will be completely ours in the day of His rapturous coming. But the thing we are!

Do you and I know what it is to look into those heavens, where the eternal Son of the Father sits in glory all His own, and see and recognize in Him what we are before the Father--"As He is," even in this world?

Can we say quite confidently, each for himself, "Yes, we are identified with Him who is our Life before the face of the Father; as He is, in whom no spot was ever found, nor can be, after the Father's own heart wholly"? That is to be in Christ, a new creation. Our rule of life is to walk in Him via His Spirit, as being what we really are: citizens of heaven, pilgrims and strangers upon earth.

All the rest the Cross has ended for us. We have died with the Lord Jesus out of the old Adamic position; our old Adamic man was crucified with Him on the Cross. He is still in us, indeed, but in us a foreign element; and we are not in him before our Father, nor identified therein in anywise, but in Christ where He is.

Can we own this, reckon upon this, and yet seek to get on in a world that crucified the Lord Jesus, a world to which we are dead, and whose prince and god is Satan, and friendship with which is enmity against God? Can we take the law with others, where our Father has shown us such heavenly grace? Not I, "for I, through the law, have died to the law, that I might live unto God" (Gal. 2:19).

I have been very hard on you, John, and I don't blame you if you should not be inclined to respond. But if you should (no colleagues, please), I intend to share what you have to say with those who receive this open letter. Although I probably have to some degree, I have sought not to misrepresent you in any way--a difficult endeavor.

Yours for His glorified best.

Resting in Him,

Miles

John MacArthur, Jr.

DISPENSATIONALIST?

DR. JOHN F. MACARTHUR, JR. claims to be a dispensationalist. In his recent book (1988), The Gospel According to Jesus, he wrote:

Dispensationalism is a fundamentally correct system of understanding God's program for the ages. Its chief element is a recognition that God's plan for Israel is not superseded by or swallowed up in His program for the church. Israel and the church are separate entities, and God will restore national Israel under the earthly rule of Jesus as Messiah.

I accept and affirm this tenet, because it emerges from a consistently literal interpretation of Scripture. And in that regard, I consider myself a traditional premillennial dispensationalist (p. 25).

So far so good; but don't go too far! Farther down on the same page, the author begins to qualify:

There is a tendency, however, for dispensationalists to get carried away with compartmentalizing truth to the point that they can make biblical distinctions. An almost obsessive desire to categorize everything neatly has led various dispensational interpreters to draw hard lines not only between the church and Israel, but also between salvation and discipleship, the church and the kingdom, Christ's preaching and the apostolic message, faith and repentance, and the age of law and the age of grace (emphases ours).

Now, dear friend, the glorified Lord Jesus Christ, in His exclusive message to His beloved Bride, the Church, through Paul, was hard line! "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). "Divided", not shaded.

In his book Dr. MacArthur quotes no less than 39 anti-dispensational, Covenant theologians in an effort to validate his thesis of Lordship Salvation. What dispensationalist would or could ever do that?! And from his Covenant stance he attacks Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer (pp. 24-27), blaming his "hard line" dispensationalism for what Dr. MacArthur terms our present-day gospel of "easy believism."

Despite his claim to be a dispensationalist, the following may explain something of why he is actually in the Covenant camp. Upon being asked what books have had the greatest impact on his life, Dr. MacArthur listed nine titles in his quarterly magazine, Masterpiece (Fall, 1988; p. 20)--each and every one authored by an anti-dispensational, Covenant theologian:

- A. Bennett -- *A Collection of Puritan Prayers & Devotions* (Banner of Truth, 1975)
- Stephen Charnock -- *The Existence & Attributes of God* (Klock & Klock, 1977)
- J.I. Packer -- *Knowing God* (Inter Varsity Press, 1973)
- D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones -- *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount* (Eerdmans, 1977)
- D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones -- *Preachers and Preaching* (Zondervan, 1971)
- Arthur Pink -- *Spiritual Growth* (Baker, 1971)
- John R.W. Stott -- *The Preacher's Portrait* (Tyndale, 1967)
- Thomas Watson -- *A Body of Divinity* (Banner of Truth, 1970)
- Thomas Watson -- *The Beatitudes* (Banner of Truth, 1975)